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SIPDIS

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USCINCENT//CCPA, USCENCOM REAR MACDILL AFB FL
STATE PASS TO AID

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTON ON MIDDLE EAST

Summary

-- Lead stories in all papers published today, May 7, highlight the latest developments in the Palestinian-Israeli standoff in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. Another lead story focuses on King Abdullah's visit to the United States and his meetings with U.S. officials.

Editorial Commentary

-- "The clash of priorities in Washington"

Semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Ra'i (05/07) editorializes: "The conflict of priorities or, better still, the clash of the agendas between the Arabs and the Israelis is going to place America in a highly sensitive position, and maybe even in an embarrassing situation. The U.S. administration is in such a position that demands an impeccable measurement of its priorities in accordance with the needs of the region and the requirements of peace in the Middle East. Giving priority to U.S. electioneering concerns, which tend to be biased in favor of the Zionist lobby in the United States . is going to waste away the peace process and is going to place the Middle East on the threshold of chaos, where extremism is the only beneficiary."

-- "What lies behind Powell's international conference?"

Daily columnist Yaser Za'atreh writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (05/07): "What do we need another international conference, and what about the Madrid Conference and its decisions? Does that not make you say that Sharon wants to invest the current pressure as well as the American stand on his side to complete his political program that aims to achieve `the long-term interim solution'?"

BERRY